

perintendent here.'

good naturedly.

where my friends are."

but once in a long while there will be a

false friend, Murray, one that will sell

"Others?" echoed Whispering Smith,

Smith felt his heart leap. He sat in

his chair turning the pack slowly, but

tween you and me is fair and right."

cards. "You've always had it." "Then keep away from her

'Then don't tell me.'

it would be of no use.

any turn of the road."

'Not if you behave yourself.'

"Surely not. No hard feelings, Mur-

ay. I came for a friendly talk, and

f it's all the same to you I'll watch this

Wickiup. I leave first-that's under-

stood. I hope-and if your pink-eved

nothing doing, will you, Murray!

It was after 12 o'clock and the room

had filled up. Roulette balls were drop-

lights were on. The dealers, fresh from

At the Wickiup Whispering Smith

ters. "I can do nothing with him," said

Smith, drawing down a window shade

talk with Sinclair. "He wants a fight."

McCloud put down his pen. "If I am

That would be hauling down the flag

for that. If he didn't center the fight

on you he would center it somewhere

else. The whole question is, who is go-

ing to run this division, Sinclair and his

to meet them on one point as another

"Then Keep Away from Her."

heel awhile and then go over to the

And you can't bully me

low to keep out.'

for the long trick,

'May look out for themselves."

quarrel that is none of yours.

with a man in my life."

understand that."

CHAPTER XI.

It was recalled one evening not long ago at the Wickiup that the affair with What do you want? Sinclair had all taken place within a period of two years, and that practically all of the actors in the event had been together and in friendly relation heavens! the only two I can't manage. on a Thanksgiving day at the Dunning ranch not so very long before the trouble began. Dicksie Dunning was away at school at the time, and Lance Dunning was celebrating with a riding and

shooting fest and a barbecue. The whole country had been invited. Bucks was in the mountains on an inspection trip, and Bill Dancing drove him with a party of railroad men over false friend, Murray, from Medicine Bend. The mountain men for 150 miles around were out. "I stay." Gene and Bob Johnson, from Oroville and the Peace river, had come with their friends. From Williams Cache neighbors. At a Thanksgiving day barbecue not even a mountain sherift would ask questions, and Ed Banks, though present, respected the holiday truce. Cowboys rode that day in the roping contest who were from Mission creek and from Two Feather river.

Among the railroad people were George McCloud, Anderson, the assistant superintendent, Farrell Kennedy, chief of the special service, and his right-hand man, Bob Scott. In especial, Sinclair's presence at the barbe-cut was recalled. He had some cronics with him from among his up-country following, and was introducing his new bridge foreman, Karg, afterward known as Flat Nose, and George Seagrue, the Montana cowboy. Sinclair fraternized that day with the Williams Cache men, and it was remarked even then that though a railroad man ne appeared somewhat outside the railroad circle. When the shooting matches Smith moistened his lips, and when he were announced a brown-eyed railroad were announced a brown-eyed railroad man was asked to enter. He had been out of the mountains for some time for that matter, I told Bucks he should man was asked to enter. He had been of dragging any allusion to her into it. For that matter, I told Bucks he should curio the Wicking possessed—the Linand was a comparative stranger in the sattern of the sent any man but me. If I'm in coln lounge. When the car that carried and was a comparative stranger in the gathering, but the Williams Cache men had not forgotten him; Rebstock, especially, wanted to see him shoot. While back and stay back as before, and send back and stay back as before, and send the williams of Abraham Lincoln from Washington to Springfield was dismantically wanted to see him shoot. While back and stay back as before, and send the wicking fell heir to one piece. much of the time out of the mountains any one else you like or Buck likes. of its elaborate furnishings, the lounge on railroad business, he was known to be closely in Bucks' counsels, and as to the mountains themselves, he was reputed to know them better than Bucks or Glover himself knew them. This was Whispering Smith; but, beyond a low-voiced greeting or an expression of surprise at meeting an old acquaintance, he avoided talk. When sion and backed up his refusal by showing a bruise on his trigger finger. the contest, suggesting the sheriff, Ed

McCloud did not meet the host, Lance Dunning, that day nor since the day of the barbecue had Du Sang or Sinclair seen Whispering Smith until the night Du Sang spotted him near the wheel in the Three Horses, Du Sang at once drew out of his game left the room. Sinclair in the meantime had undertaken a quarrelsome interview with Whispering

Banks, for that office.

"I supposed you knew I was here. sald Smith to him, amiably, "Of cours I don't travel in a private car or carry billboard on my back, but I haven't

been hiding.' 'The last time we talked," returned Sinclair, measuring words carefully, 'you were going to stay out of the

mountains. 'I should have been glad to, Murray. Affairs are in such shape on the division now that somebody had to come

The two men were sitting at a table. Whispering Smith was cutting and leisurely mixing a pack of cards.

"Well, so far as I'm concerned, I'm out of it." Sinclair went on, after a pause, "but, however that may be, i u're back here looking for trouble there's no reason, I guess, why you

That's not it. I'm not here looking for trouble; I'm here to fix this thin; What do you want.'

"I'm willing to do anything fair and right." declared Whispering Smith, raising his voice a little above the hum of to get out."

"Fair and right is an old song. 'And a good one to sing in this country just now. I'll do anything I can to adjust any grievance, Murray. What do you want?

Sinclair for a moment was silent, and gang or the company? and it is as easy his answer made plain his unwilling-"There never I know of no way of making this kind ness to speak at all. would have been a grievance if I'd been of an affair pleasant. I am going to treated like a white man." His eye

burned sullenly. "I've been treated That is not it." "That is it," declared Sinclair, sayagely, "and they'll find it's it."

'Murray, I want to say only thisonly this to make things clear. Bucks feels that he's been treated worse than Then let him put me back where !

'It's a little late for that, Murray; late," said Smith, "Shouldn't you rather took good mone; and get off the division? Mind you, say good money, Murray-and peace." Sinclair answered without the slight-

est hesitation "Not while that man Whispering Smith smiled. "I've got no authority to kill McCloud."

There are plenty of men in the mountains that don't need any. "But let's start fair," urged Whistling Smith, softly. He leaned forward with one finger extended in con-"Don't let us have any misunderstanding on the start. Let Mc-Cloud alone. If he is killed-now I'm speaking fair and open and making threats, but I know how it will come do some riding, as I told you. Kennedy out-there will be nothing but killing is working up through the Deep Creek here for six months. We will make just country, and has three men with him. that memorandum on McCloud. Now I shall ride toward the Cache and meet ble man in the world wants something." pass.

"Gordon, would it do any good to ask

answer them. I can look wise, but I don't know anything. You know what we are up against. This fellow has grown a tiger among the wolves, and ! he has turned the pack loose on us. One thing I ask you to do. Don't expose yourself at night. Your life isn't worth a coupling-pin if you do,

McCloud raised his hand. "Take care of yourself! If you are murdered in this fight I shall know I got you in and then I am to blame."

"And suppose you were?" Smith had risen from his chair. He had few mannerisms, and recalling the man the few times I have seep him, the only im-pression he has left on me is that of quiet and gentleness. "Suppose you He was resting one arm on top of McCloud's desk. "What of it? You have done for me up here what I couldn't do, George. You have been kind to Marion when she hadn't a friend near. You have stood between him and her when I couldn't be here to do it, and when she didn't want me Every sensible man wants something, Murray. This is a big country. There's to-helped her when I hadn't the privilege of doing it." McCloud put up his a World's Fair running somewhere all hand in protest, but it was unheeded the time on it. Why not travel a little? How many times it has been in my heart to kill that man. She knows it; she prays it may never happen. That "I want my job, or I want a new suis why she stays here and has kept me "Just exactly the two things, and, by out of the mountains. She says they would talk about her if I lived in the Come once more and I'll meet you."
"No!" Sinclair rose to his feet. "No same town, and I have stayed away. -damn your money! This is my home. He threw himself back into the chair. "It's going beyond both of us now. I've The high country is my country; it's kept the promise I made to her today to do all in my power to settle this thing without bloodshed. It will not be "It's filled with your friends; I know that. But don't put your trust in your friends. They will stay by you, I know; settled in that way, George.'

"Was he at Sugar Buttes?" "If not, his gang was there. quick get-away, the short turn on Van Horn, killing two men to rattle the posse-it all bears Sinclair's earmarks. Whispering Smith looked up in admiration. "I know you're game. It isn't necessary for me to say that to He has gone too far. He has piled up there was not only a big delegation—more of one than was really desirable—but it was led by old John Rebstock himself. When the invitation is general, lines cannot be too closely drawn. Not only was Lance Dunning something of a sport himself, but on the Long Range it is part of a stockman's creed to be on good terms with his neighbors. At a Thankself, and the sign of the fight you are going into against the company. You can worry them; you've done it. But a broncho might as well try to buck a locomotive as for one man or six or 600 to win ou tin the way you are playing."

I will look out for my friends; others—" Sinclair hitched his belt and paused, but Whispering Smith, cutting plunder till he is reckless. He is crazy and running the cards, gave no heed. to do it. He put you here, George, to round that man up. This is the price His eyes were fixed on the green cloth under his fingers. "Others-" repeated for your advancement, and you must

"It is all right for me to pay it, but I don't want you to pay it. Will you have a care for yourself, Gordon?"

"Of course, of course! Well, if this is the end of it, I'm sorry." "Will you?" "You will be sorry if you mix in a "You need never ask me to be careful," Smith went on. "That is my bus-"Why, Murray, I never had a quarrel iness. I asked you to watch your window shades at night, and when I came "You are pretty smooth, but you can't drive me out of this country. I know who are likely to forget, and in this how well you'd like to do it; and, take kind of a game a man never forgets but in just now I found one up. It is you notice, there's one trail you can't cross once. I'll lie down on the Lincoln even if you stay here. I suppose you lounge, George,

"Get into the bed."
"No: I like the lounge, and I'm off

with only one hand now; the other hand In the private room of the superinwas free. Sinclair eyed him sidewise. tendent, provided as a sleeping apartment in the old headquarters building Are you willing to say that I stand in the way of a settlement?"

Its classification and the lounge still remains as an early day relic. Whispering Smith walker Sinclair sat down and put his hands into the bedroom and disposed himsel on the table. "No; your matter and mine is another affair. All I want berowed one of your pillows, George," he called out, presently.

Whispering Smith's eyes were on the "I'm not telling you. You will do as from Bill Dancing. Bill Dancing," he wanted track across the divide and into did without the slightest reserve and you please; so will I. I left here because Marion asked me to. I am here low as if in final memorandum for the threw up his hands. But there was sie liked it or not, it had been not here to defend himself, but he needs ow because I have been sent here. It s in the course of my business. I have ny living to earn and my friends to

McCloud, under a light shaded above ning fire of protests and forebodings Marion would suggest a way his desk, opened a roll of blue-prints. about the danger of exposing men during some kind of unember protect. Don't dictate to me, because He was going to follow a construction ing the winter season, but stuck to his amends. But such opportunities had "Well, you know now how to get into gang up the Crawling Stone in the post. "Every one knows that; few know tered the inner room and looked at his working for months with Lance Dun- prisoner to the Stone ranch

may sometimes mean. He sat a mo- understood that Lance Dunning had ex- in his hand and one leg thrown over ment with folded arms on the side of pressed himself favorably to the enter- a corner of the table, was facing Mc ping, and above the faro table the extra his bed, studying the tired face, de- prise, fenseless in the slumber of fatigue. supper, were putting things in order When he turned out the light and lay lown, he wondered whether, somewhere in the valley of the great river ound McCloud in the office signing letmorning, he should encounter the slight and reckless horsewoman who had abiding place. Dicksie ordered hats unagainst her charm too long. She had become, how or when he could not tell, nating one-the creature of his concross the whole division. It is too late stant thought. Already she meant more to him than all else in the world. He well knew that if called on to choose between Dicksie and all else he ould only choose her. But as he drew ogether the curtains of thought and sleep stole in upon him, he was resolved first to have Dicksie; to have all else if he could, but, in any case, Dicksie Dunning. When he awoke day was breaking in the mountains. The huge silver watch, the low-voiced man and the formidable six-shooter had disappeared. It was time to get up, and Marion Sinclair had promised an early breakfast.

CHAPTER XII. The Quarrel.

The beginning of the Crawling Stone ine marked the first determined effort inder President Bucks, while undertaking the reconstruction of the system for through traffic, to develop the ich local territory tributary to the nountain division. New policies in construction dated from the same period. Glover, with an enormous capital to be ignored. The older mountain men met the innovation as they met any departure from their traditions, with curosity and distrust. On the other hand. the new and younger blood took hold alled, "Yo, heave ho!" at headquarters. McCloud. they bent themselves clear across the system for a hard pull together.

long time without what they wanted."

Smith flushed and nodded. You needn't have said that, but no matter.

Rockies came with his own right-hand last meeting had seemed, on reflection, unfortunate. She felt that she boy, but don't be disappointed if I can't below Piedmont, opened a material must have appeared to him shockingly der my hand."

Rockies came with his own right-hand last meeting had seemed, on reflection, unfortunate. She felt that she der my hand."

"I know what they wanted."

The seemed is a few questions?"

I know what they wanted."

The seemed is a few questions?"

The seemed is a few questions?

The seemed is a few questions?

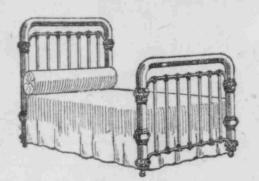
The seemed is a few questions?

The seeme

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imself like a hen into the dou- the lower Crawling Stone valley, when the scene ble blanket, 'the horse Kennedy has left me will be all right; he got three spring. When McCloud told him ne when Marion spoke of him, which she was all right; he got three spring. snorted, driving his nose into the pil- the lower valley by spring. Mears with no reference as to whether Dicknight, "he will get himself killed if he fools around Sinclair too much now." metal in the old man, and he was for sie's mind to bring up the subject of orders all the time. He kept up a run-the disagreeable scene, hoping that

morning, and wanted to look over the | Spring found the construction of the was the new railroad superintendent, surveys. Whispering Smith, breathing valley line well advanced, and the whom their bluff neighbor Sinclair regularly, lay not far away. It was late grades nearing the lands of the Dun-never referred to other than as the colning over the line and McCloud had He lay like a boy asleep. On the chair been called frequently into consulta- rode slowly along the eside his head he had placed his old- tion to adjust the surveys to objecfashioned hunting-case watch, as big as tions raised by Dicksie's cousin to the the corrals and in at the back of the an alarm clock, the kind a railroad crossing of the ranch lands. Even house. Throwing her lines to Beside the watch he had laid his huge a strong current of discontent set from back porch door made her way unobrevolver in its worn leather scabbard. the managing head of the Stone ranch. served to her room. his companion's merey, and McCloud, faction often reached the railroad peothought of what between men confidence the newspapers, and it was generally Lance Dunning, standing with a cigar

as weighty as there. She spent much as Dicksie looked into the room, and of her time on horseback, with Bend, where she rode with frequency, Marion's shop became her favorite more. But the spirited controversy on this point, as on many others-Dickot alone a pretty woman but a fasci- sie's haughtiness and Marion's restraint, quite unmoved by any show of pleasure-ended always in drawing the

two closer to each other. One March afternoon, coming hon from Medicine Bend, she saw at some distance before her a party of men or horseback. She was riding a trail eading from the pass road that folowed the hills, and the party was coming up the bridge road from the lower ranch. Dicksie had good eyes and something unusual in the riding of the men was soon apparent to her. Losing and regaining sight of them at different turns in the trail, she made out, as she rode among the trees, that about our crossing above it." they were cowboys of her own ranch and riding, under evident excitement about a strange horseman. She recognized in the escort Stormy Gorman. the feroclous foreman of the ranch, and most reckless of the men. These three carried rifles slung across their pom

nels, and in front of them rode the stranger. Dicksie's mind. The railroad graders all if we can't hold our grade, whereas that belongs to us, for they will cerwere in the valley below the ranch, it would be very simple to run a new tainly come down if you do. staked for the new undertaking, gave and she had heard her cousin say a line for your ditch, and my engineers orders to push the building every month good deal on a point she cared little will do it for you, without a dollar of n the year, and for the first time in about, as to where the railroad should expense to you, Mr. Dunning. nountain railroad building winter was cross the Stone ranch. Approaching ing, she checked her horse in the shade | English?" of a cottonwood tree, and as the party

Unluckily, as she caught a glimpse of him she was conscious that he was tained under false representations." McCloud, resting the operating on the looking at her. She bent forward to shoulders of his assistant, Anderson, hide a momentary confusion, spoke tations? about the main question. Every sensi- him somewhere near the South Mission devoted himself wholly to forwarding briskly to her horse, and rode out of the construction plans, and his first sight. At Marion's she had carefully his cigar, "Who are you? clash over winter road-building in the avoided him. Her precipitancy at their

slipped away unimproved, and here

when McCloud put away his maps, en- ning ranch. Right-of-way men had been lege guy, being brought apparently as a Busied with her thoughts, Dicksie until a long detour brought her around man would wind up with a spike-maul. When the proceedings had been closed, ground, she alighted and through the friend is waiting outside tell him there Breathing peacefully, he lay quite at Rumors of Lance Dunning's dissatis- across the big hall she heard men's voices in dispute, and she slipped into Who is the albino, by the way? You looking down on this man who never ple. Vague talk of an extensive irrithe dining room, where she could hear don't know him? I think I do. Fort made a mistake never forgot a danger gation scheme planned by Sinclair for and might see without being seen. made a mistake, never forgot a danger, gation scheme planned by Sinclair for and might see without being seen ity, if I remember. Well, good night, and never took an unnecessary chance, the Crawling Stone valley crept into The office was filled with cowboys.

Cloud, who stood before him with his Jim in curt tones "My men were acting "You have no right to give such or

ders." McCloud said, distinctly, "nor to detain me, nor to obstruct our free pasbefore he seated himself to detail his blazed so in anger when he stood be-

ognize any such survey. And if your am riding on a public road." right-of-way men had ever said a word flume I never would have given you a Stevens cut our wires this morningright of way at all.' There were never but two lines run our right of way.

below the creek; after you raised objection I ran them both, and both were again!" above the flume.

"Well, you can't put a grade there, tion laws will protect our rights. "I certainly can't put a grade in be-

"Why not let us cross where we are and run a new level for your ditch that was dragged on it. Where the men are wrath for a long time, will put the flume higher up? "You will have to cross below the Denison and Jim Baugh, two of the flume where it stands, or you won't

cross the ranch at all. McCloud was silent for a momen "I am using a supported grade there for eight miles to get over the hill within Fragments of the breakfast-table a three-tenths limit. I can't drop back yesterday will get into trouble." talk of the morning came back to there. We might as well not build at

"It certainly is. But in matter of fact

Lance Dunning waved his hand as

"I don't recognize any contract ob-"Do you accuse me of false represen-

Lance Dunning flipped the ash from "I am just a plain everyday civil engi- angrily.

"One's enough, I hope," he went on, yard and began track laying toward rude, and there was in her recalling of "I am talking facts. Whispering this room" may have rigged the joker—I "Not if there is to be any shooting or know. Whoever rigged it, it has threats of shooting that involve my

"Any charge against Whispering Smith is a charge against me. He i



"Cousin Lance."

no defense. You have charged me with anything that may cost him his life fore her at Marion's. He had struggled practically refused to supply any agreed to convey to us under our sur- misleading surveys. I was telephoned for this morning to come over to see Damn your survey! I never had a why you had held up our work, and plat of any such survey. I don't rec- your men cover me with rifles while I

> "You have been warned, or your men about crossing the creek above the have, to keep off this ranch. Your man "As he had a perfect right to do on "If you think so, stranger, go ahead

> "Oh, no! We won't have civil warnot right away, at least. And if you I and some of my neighbors are going and your men have threatened and to dam up that basin, and the irriga- browbeaten me enough for today, I

"Don't set foot on the Stone ranch ow the flume, and you refuse to talk again, and don't send any men here to to ride over the ground with you again trespass, mark you! "I mark you perfectly. I did not set foot willingly on your ranch today. I

grading now, they will finish their "No, they won't." 'What, would you drive us off land ou have already deeded?"

"The first man that cuts our wires or orders them cut where they were strung "Then don't string any wires on land

Lance Dunning turned in a passion. 'I'll put a bullet through you if you touch a barb of Stone ranch wire! Stormy Gorman jumped forward with the fork of the two roads toward an ultimatum. "Cross where I tell you, his hand covering the grip of his sixwhich she and the cowboys were rid- or keep off the Stone ranch. Is that shooter. "Yes, damn you, and I'll put another"

"Cousin Lance!" Dicksie Dunning adrode up the draw she saw the horse- we must cross on the survey agreed on vanced swiftly into the room. "You are man under surveillance. It was George in the contract for a right-of-way under our own roof, and you are wrong to talk in that way Her cousin stared at her. this is no place for you!

'It is when my cousin is in danger of forgetting he is a gentleman." You are interfering with what you know nothing about!" exclaimed Lance,

"I know what is due to every one "Will you be good enough to leave

There was a hush. dropped back. Dicksie stood motion ess. She gave no sign in her manne that she heard the words, but she looked very steadily at her cousin.

'You forget yourself!" was all she "I am master here!

"Also my cousin," murmured Dick-'You don't understand this matter at all!" declared Lance Dunning, ve-

"Nothing could justify your lan guage." "Do you think I am going to allow this railroad company to ruin ranch while I am responsible here! You have no business interfering,

'I think I have." "These matters are not of your af-

stood riveted. McCloud felt himself swallowing, and took a step forward with an effort as Dicksie advance Her hair, loosened by her ride, spread low upon her head. She stood in hel saddle habit, with her quirt still in hand. "Any affair that may lead m cousin into shooting is my affair. make it mine. This is my father's roof. I neither know nor care anything about what led to this quarre but the quarrel is mine now. not allow my cousin to plunge into it." She turned suddenly, and her eyes fell on McCloud. "I am not willing to leave either myself or my cousin in a false position. I regret espefally that Mr. McCloud should be brought into so unpleasant a scene, because he has already suffered rudeness at my own hands-McCloud flushed. He raised his hand slightly.

Dicksie, before he could speak. Then, turning, she withdrew from the room. as he spoke again to her cousin "there need be no serious controversy over the right-of-way matter, Mr. Dun ning. I certainly shall not precipitate and let us see whether we can't arrive at some conclusion' But Lance was angry, and nursed his

(Continued next Sunday.)

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